

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A belt-type fixing device comprising a one-piece nip forming member that is fixed inside an endless-sheet-like fixing belt to be heated so as to be incapable of rotating, and a rotatable pressurizing roller that is in pressure contact with the nip forming member with the fixing belt interposed between, wherein contact part between the fixing belt and the pressurizing roller forms a fixing nip, the fixing nip is formed only by the nip forming member, and a surface of the nip forming member that is opposite to the pressurizing roller is configured as a curved surface extending along an outer circumferential surface of the pressurizing roller so that a pressure distribution in the fixing nip is made generally flat with respect to a paper feeding direction.

2. (Original) A belt-type fixing device as claimed in claim 1, wherein
the pressurizing roller has an elastic layer on an outer circumference thereof and the nip forming member comprises material that is harder than the elastic layer.

3. (Original) A belt-type fixing device as claimed in claim 2, wherein the nip forming member causes a radial strain not less than 0.3 mm in the elastic layer of the pressurizing roller with a mean pressure not less than 80 kPa.

4. (Original) A belt-type fixing device as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a heat source for heating the fixing belt, in a position away from the fixing nip, wherein a thermal conductivity of the elastic layer of the pressurizing roller is 0.3 W/(m•K) or less.

5. (Original) A belt-type fixing device as claimed in claim 2, wherein a thickness of the elastic layer of the pressurizing roller is not less than 4 mm.

6. (Original) A belt-type fixing device as claimed in claim 1, wherein a radius r_1 of curvature of the curved surface and a radius r_2 of curvature of the pressurizing roller are set so that a relation of a following expression 1 holds:

$$r_2 \leq r_1 \leq r_2 \cdot K \quad (\text{expression 1})$$

(wherein $1 \leq K < 1.13$)

7. (Original) A belt-type fixing device as claimed in claim 1, wherein a mean radius r_1 of curvature of the curved surface and a radius r_2 of curvature of the pressurizing roller are set so that a relation of a following expression 2 holds:

$$r_2 \leq r_1 \leq r_2 \cdot K \quad (\text{expression 2})$$

(wherein $1 \leq K \leq 1.3$)

8. (Original) A belt-type fixing device as claimed in claim 6, wherein the pressurizing roller has an elastic layer on an outer circumference thereof and the elastic layer has a JIS-A hardness in a range from 5 to 40.

9. (Original) A belt-type fixing device as claimed in claim 6, wherein a mean pressure in the fixing nip is not less than 50 kPa and not more than 250 kPa.

10. (Original) A belt-type fixing device as claimed in claim 6, wherein the fixing belt is wound around a rotatable heating roller having a heat source and around the nip forming member provided in a position away from the heating roller.

11. (Currently Amended) A belt-type fixing device for fixing a toner image on a paper, the belt-type fixing device comprising:

an endless-sheet-like belt member,

a pressurizing roller which has an elasticity and on which the paper is passed through a fixing nip that is contact part between the pressurizing roller and an outer circumferential surface of the belt member, and

a one-piece nip forming member that is harder than the pressurizing roller, that is positioned inside the belt member, that relatively presses the belt member against the pressurizing roller, and that has a pressing surface opposite to the pressurizing roller and formed of a curved surface extending along an outer circumferential surface of the pressurizing roller, wherein the fixing nip is formed only by the nip forming member.

12. (Original) A belt-type fixing device as claimed in claim 11, wherein a radius of curvature of the pressing surface of the nip forming member is substantially equal to a radius of curvature of the outer circumferential surface of the pressurizing roller.

13. (Original) A belt-type fixing device as claimed in claim 11, wherein a radius r_1 of curvature of the pressing surface of the nip forming member and a radius r_2 of curvature of the outer circumferential surface of the pressurizing roller are set so that a relation of a following expression 3 holds:

$$r_2 \leq r_1 \leq r_2 \cdot K \quad (\text{expression 3})$$

(wherein $1 \leq K < 1.13$)

14. (Original) A belt-type fixing device as claimed in claim 11, wherein the pressing surface of the nip forming member is formed of one and same material continuously.

15. (Original) A belt-type fixing device as claimed in claim 11, wherein the pressurizing roller is driven to rotate, and the belt member follows the pressurizing roller and thereby rotates.